



Democracy and Governance

Fall 2009



Photo: USAID/Afghanistan

USAID promotes public awareness of constitutional rights and the formal justice system through information campaigns.

DEMOCRACY & GOVERNANCE SNAPSHOT

- Developing capacity to improve administrative procedures, hire civil service professionals, and improve service delivery.
- Training judges and strengthening the Supreme Court to manage its caseload more transparently and efficiently.
- Supporting National Assembly for more effective oversight of the budget and legislative processes.
- Improving municipalities' basic service delivery for trash collection, road maintenance, and water distribution.
- Assisting the Independent Electoral Commission prepare for the 2009/2010 elections.
- Training civil society and providing more than \$7.5 million in grants to local NGOs.
- Funding 39 community radio stations and training journalists.

Data as of November 2009

BACKGROUND

In the years since the fall of the Taliban, Afghanistan has drafted a new constitution and democratically elected the President, Parliament, and Provincial Councils. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) is now focused on building its capacity to provide basic services to citizens; establishing a more effective, accountable, and transparent administration at all levels; and implementing measurable improvements in fighting corruption, upholding justice, and increasing the rule of law.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

USAID's Democracy and Governance program supports the establishment of a broadly accepted national government that promotes national unity and effectively serves the needs of the Afghan people. USAID helps develop the capacity of key institutions including the Independent Electoral Commission, the National Assembly, the Supreme Court, and target ministries and institutions of the executive branch such as the Independent Directorate for Local Governance, and the Civil Service Commission. USAID also provides training to Afghan civil society organizations to advocate for society-led reforms.

INCREASING THE CAPACITY OF THE FORMAL LEGAL SYSTEM

USAID's rule of law program has three main components: building sustainable capacity for the judiciary and the law schools; strengthening the judiciary's capacity to conduct public legal awareness programs; and rapidly stabilizing the informal justice system in support of counterinsurgency. A centerpiece of the new program is its support to counterinsurgency efforts by helping revitalize informal dispute-resolution councils in villages where insurgents have recently lost control. In addition, the program continues to support the Supreme Court by providing professional training to judges and strengthening the capacity of the courts in managing and budgeting, both of which resulted in a better managed court system. A computerized system for tracking cases was developed and judges and administrators throughout the country have been trained in the system, improving caseload management. All of Afghanistan's laws since 1964 have been computerized and widely distributed to judges, lawyers, and the law schools. Additionally, law school instructors have received training in interactive teaching methodologies, and a core curriculum has been developed and deployed in all the nation's law schools, ensuring that all graduates receive the same basic training.

STRENGTHENING POLITICAL PROCESSES

A strong Independent Election Commission (IEC) and a voter registry will enable the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to carry out valid, acceptable elections, utilizing



Democracy and Governance (continued)



Photo: USAID/Afghanistan

USAID trains sitting judges on legal foundations.



Photo: USAID/Afghanistan

USAID supports municipalities and increases employment through city works programs.

internally developed expertise. In the lead-up to the 2009/2010 elections, USAID provided support to the electoral process through voter registration, planning and logistics, increasing the capacity of the IEC, training for potential candidates, domestic monitoring, and voter education. Other ongoing projects include providing governors and members of Provincial Councils, religious leaders, and community organizations with strategic planning assistance and civic education.

INCREASING THE PRESENCE, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND PERFORMANCE OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL SECTOR

USAID promotes the development of a strong and active civil society, with an emphasis on women-focused organizations, through technical assistance, capacity building trainings, and grants to non-governmental organizations (NGOs). To date, USAID has provided more than \$7.5 million in small grants and capacity building training to more than 200 NGOs. In collaboration with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, USAID helped pass an NGO Law that defines the eligibility requirements to be classified as a non-profit organization and receive tax-exempt status.

USAID also promotes free and independent media through journalism training and support for development of 39 community radio stations. These stations, which are governed by community boards, reach more than seven million Afghans.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

USAID provides assistance to the Office of the President and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to streamline and modernize office functions to facilitate more effective policy processes. Executive Branch offices such as the National Security Council, the Office of the Chief of Staff, and the Office of Administrative Affairs also receive key capacity building support from USAID.

USAID actively works with the members and professional staff of the Afghan National Assembly. Assistance focuses on establishing effective committee structures, facilitating seminars, and increasing their research capability. USAID supports GIRoA at the sub-national level by assisting the Independent Directorate for Local Governance as it reforms policies and structures, and by assisting the 34 civil service training centers to train sub-national government officials.

Additionally, USAID is supporting target ministries, including Agriculture, Education, Finance, and Energy and Water, and the Civil Service Commission, to improve their ability to provide basic services nationwide; recruit competent and credible civil servants based on merit; and establish more accountable and transparent public financial management systems.

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